3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
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the blade being turned in the haft, which is adapted to it either way), their preservation is an object of no small importance, two only being obtained from a large tree with infinite labour, it being very necessary that the planks of the boat, on account of her construction, should all be of the same length as the 'bankong.' These boats, according to their size, carry crews of from thirty to ninety men, and it is computed that, without making any extraordinary exertion, the rivers of Sarebas and the Sakarran branch of the Batang Lupar could send to sea 200 of them, averaging fifty men each. From the nature of these boats, and the slightness of their build, it may easily be imagined that they are not manageable in a seaway, their length causing them to open at the seams: on such occasions, should they not be near enough to the land to run into smooth water, the crew all jump overboard, and hang by the side of the boat: this I have been assured they have done for many successive hours when the squalls, which are usually short in these tranquil seas, have been prolonged, so as to render it necessary. In this situation they take it by turns for one or two to enter the boat, and cook and eat their rice, until the squall is past.

The Dyaks, on their cruises, are capable of enduring great fatigue, and, if they meet with reverses, have frequently to contend with the pangs of hunger. It is no uncommon thing for the Dyaks to pull for eighteen hours, with only short intervals of rest sufficient to boil and cook their rice, and this, from the beautiful regu-

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
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larity of their strokes, and their being long accustomed to the practice, does not appear much to fag them; in smooth water, and, without tides, at their regular stroke, they pull about six miles an hour, but when exerting themselves fully can double that rate of speed.

The 'tambangs,' or sharp built sampan boats of Singapore, which are so renowned throughout the East for their speed, are soon lost sight of by the Dyak 'bankongs,' and I should think it probable that no boats in the world could equal them for speed. Each tribe of the Dyaks has peculiar strokes in which it delights, so that in the dark a Sarebas or Sakarran boat could tell whether an approaching one was of Lundu, of the Balows, or a Malay. The Malays also have many methods of paddling, in which the Borneans, or natives of the town of Bruni, excel the inhabitants of the other villages on the coast. On their cruises the Dyaks, who are not, in their sober moments, friends of boisterous mirth, never make use of the cheering and inspiriting songs of the Malayan boatmen: the noise made by each paddle beating time on the gunwale of the boat is to them sufficiently enlivening, and they want no other encouragement to exertion when it is necessary.

When they have met with reverses on an expedition—such as when they lose their boats and are forced to find their way through the jungle, without food, to their homes, perhaps at a great distance—famine is very oppressive to them, though some parts of the woods produce ferns and other edible roots in abun-

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
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261 726 dance; but these generally grow on the river's banks, and in open places where the fear of the enemy prevents the fugitive Dyak from searching for them: on those occasions he has recourse to the bark and leaves of trees; and sometimes, to still the cravings of hunger, an oily earth, which is found in some places, is eaten.

726 On one occasion the men from a fleet of Sakarran Dyaks having been driven ashore, they were twelve days in reaching their homes, having lost five persons by famine, and many by their unrelenting enemies. The difficulties they had to encounter in walking through forests belonging to the enemy, and which were unknown to them, in crossing rivers, and eluding pursuit, were innumerable. Two poor fellows of this party were discovered crossing, on a log of wood, one of the numerous creeks; and another party, which had taken possession of a deserted house, were found in it by their enemies, who had no pity upon their miserable condition.

About this time (1845) Gila Beranhi, one of the chiefs of Sakarran—who had been one of the most relentless pirates—before his death, which occurred after only two days illness, is reported to have called his tribe about him, and exhorted them to leave off piracy, as the failure of the expedition just recorded, and his own approaching death, were all brought about by the supernatural power of the Rajah of Sarawak, whom he said it was impossible to withstand; so that we see the first slight check to the conquests of these hitherto invincible tribes, leads

processing and manufacture from Indonesia.

4. Rice

Rice is the basic food among the Ibans and other peoples of Sarawak, and, as will be discussed later, much ritual and religious belief is associated with every aspect of rice cultivation. From the inauguration of the annual activities with augury and ceremonial claiming of the fields to be farmed, until the concluding crooning to the rice-spirit as the grain is stored away, the acquisition of rice is an all-embracing way of life among the Ibans, touching on every aspect of their lives. To eat(makai) means, in Iban, to eat rice. And no matter how filling and varied other foods are, an Iban has not eaten until he has partaken of rice.[39]

According to the 1960 census (Jones 1960: 260-1), 46 per cent of the total Sarawak population depended either entirely or primarily on rice cultivation for their living. As indicated in Table 7 on the following page, Ibans account for almost two-thirds of all rice farmers. And of the total economically active Iban population, almost 89 per cent are engaged entirely or primarily in rice cultivation.

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[39] After eating a large dinner- but no rice - with our family, some Iban visitors left and went to the pasar to eat. When we accidentally encountered them at their second meal, we apologized for their going away hungary, "Oh no, they politely replied, your food was very good, but we hadn't eaten (rice) yet."